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THE DEADLY
HANDS OF
KUNG FU
APRIL № 23

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THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU™

**SPECIAL MOVIE
ISSUE!**

**"THE
KILLER
ELITE"**

MARVEL

**MARTIAL ARTS FILMS:
A HARD LOOK AT THE
NEW WAVE!**

FEN BARR



STAN LEE presents

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

Vol. 1 / No. 23

April 1976

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**IRON FIST: THE LIVING WEAPON
BRIDGE OF SORROW, BRIDGE OF PAIN**
By Chris Claremont & Rudy Nebres
Iron Fist faces his greatest battle— a grim
showdown with the Silver Dragon!
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Critic Dave Kraft takes a look at what ex-James Bonds and future Bruce Lees are up to these days.	

**SONS OF THE TIGER:
REVENGE IS THE JACK
OF HEARTS, TIGER—**
By Bill Mantlo, Gil Kane & Rico Rival
Who is the strange assassin that calls
himself the Jack of Hearts? And what is
his strange mission of vengeance? Plus, a
senses-shattering *shock* ending!
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It's larrupin' letters time again, although before we get into the midst of your missives we'd like to make an earnest entreaty for more mail. For some indeterminate reason, the amount of critical comments that traditionally greet each new issue of DEADLY HANDS has of late been steadily shrinking. It may mean that we're finally managing to please most of you, most of the time—since people are more inclined to write letters when they're disturbed about something than when they're pleased. But we're by no means persuaded that this is the reason for this current deficit, and it's to *your* benefit to tell us precisely what you think about this ish... since that's virtually the *only* way we can know when we hit and when we miss.

Okay, kung fu enthusiasts—it's all up to you now!

Dear Marvel,

Although I wouldn't call myself a martial arts freak, DEADLY HANDS is slowly, steadily (but surely) becoming my favorite Marvel b&w title. Your current issue (#20) was fantastic.

The cover: Magnificent! I ask for Ken Barr, and boy, do I get him! That cover knocked me right off my feet... I could almost feel Mr. Norris' foot with that kick! Great job, Ken! (Hey, while I'm still gazing at the cover, lemme say that I like the new corner box; who painted the picture of Shang-Chi? It's great...)

The frontpiece, also by Ken Barr, was great. It was so good, in fact, that it could have been the cover.

Chapter Two of the Iron Fist spectacular, "Soul Slayer," was very good. Chris Claremont's script was excellent, and so was Rudy's art. The whole thing is moving along as smoothly as the Golden Dragon saga did... maybe even *smoother*! Congrats and kudos, you two!

The Chuck Norris interview (handled by Jim Whitmore, everyone's favorite ape glosserizer) was excellent, 100% better than I expected. I thought it was going to be *bad* with a capital "B," but, well, we all make mistakes, right?

"The Killer Elite" review was pretty good, especially accompanied by all the photos... (And, they were nice!)

"The Beginning" looks like the END for the Sons of the Tiger, but their "death" shall not be in vain: Bill Mantlo, George Perez and Jack Abel are still going strong. And, the White Tiger looks like he could turn into some replacement!

Thanks, again... for another great issue.

Larry Dean
6362 Laurentian Ct.
Flint, Mich. 48504

It's always a pleasure to give credit where it's overdue, and even though we've substituted a corner box featuring Iron Fist by Bob Larkin for the duration of that worthy's serial, the painting of

media, and here was one small chance *not* to submit to that kind of crass commercialism.

But for the viewing pleasure of Marvelites such as yourself, Larry, who would get a kick out of seeing our initial interpretation of the cover scene, we included that original sketch as the frontpiece.

Querido Marvel—

Issue #'s 19 and 20 of DEADLY HANDS featuring the White Tiger in the Sons of the Tiger strip was a glimmer of light in a long black tunnel. Traditionally, the comic medium has been very racist toward Hispanics. The Cisco Kid and Zorro do not justify the scores of hispanic stereo types and villains which have appeared in comics since the beginning. Hopefully, the appearance of White Tiger will signal the end of racism in comics and bring hope and understanding to a people much maligned.

I personally believe that Bill Mantlo and George Perez should get an award for the story "A Beginning." Not since Piri Thomas's "Down These Mean Streets" has anyone caught the essence of the Hispanic experience in America. "A Beginning" was so real that for a moment it was as if El Barrio had been transported to my living room.

Move over Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams, 'cause Bill Mantlo and George Perez have stolen your crown!

Hector Maximo Rambla

712 W. 178 St., Apt. 5E

New York, N.Y. 10033

The portrayal of various minority races in comics has been a source of contention for quite some time—even as it has been in other branches of the media. And, generally speaking, it's never been the intention of those producing our comics to intentionally misrepresent or single out a particular race for mistreatment (except during the War Years, when blind patriotism was encouraged and stereotypical propaganda portraying our "enemies" as sub-human was being practiced in virtually *all* branches of the media).

There is hardly a race or minority that is not represented among the collective assemblage of people known affectionately as the Marvel Bullpen, and virtually all of us are working in our own ways to eradicate any last vestiges of inadvertent racism that might exist in our medium. So Bill and George are honored by your kind remarks, Hector—and they urge you to keep watchin', 'cause there's more in store. Much more!

Dear Archie,

Bill Mantlo has done some amazing things with the Sons of the Tiger series. Not only has he made all of them three-dimensional characters, he has done something that I think all writers at Marvel should notice. In every superhero's life, (or supergroup, as the case may be) he comes to a point where he has to ask himself: "Why the hell am I doing this?" That is, the superhero's original reason for becoming a superhero becomes faded, and they have to find another reason, however corny or small it may be. Bill has handled this excellently with the Sons

so far. I hope this current storyline takes place during the next six months, so Bill may use it to its fullest potential. The White Tiger is fascinating. He's one of the best most intriguing new characters to come around since the Vision. I loved every aspect of his character: his arrogant superiority, his line of reasoning, his sense of responsibility, and his kung fu skill. I'm just going to sit back and enjoy the show...

The Iron Fist series is all I hoped it would be—and more. Chris Claremont is Iron Fist's best writer, since he can write the fantasy stories and the superhero stories and make them all masterpieces. Perhaps what I like about Chris' style the most is his usage of captions, original stories, not-too-stereotyped dialogue, and exciting, well-paced adventures. The fantasy in the Jade stories is wonderful. Claremont keeps you on a treadmill of cluded mystery, and each chapter brings in answers, and more mysteries. Chris tries his utmost to keep Iron Fist from getting boring, and he has succeeded. The part where he was blind was well-done. Rudy Nebres is the Iron Fist artist! He is able to draw three or four moves into one panel giving us more story and art for our dollar's worth. I ask you to alternate Shang-Chi and Iron Fist for the lead series. This would keep us from getting too tired of either. Although, to tell the truth, if I had to pick one over the other, it would be Iron Fist. I hope reader enthusiasm is just as great as mine.

For a change, I enjoyed the articles. The Chuck Norris interview by Jim Whitmore were interesting. Hopefully, Don McGregor will be able to give us another fantastic movie review. I, for one, would like to see Archie use his typewriter for something more than editorials. It would be nice to see him script a kung-fu strip.

Well, gentlemen, (and gentleladies) I really must go. This is my sixth letter to Marvel I've written this weekend and I really must stop to enjoy my vacation on Christmas before writing my next batch. Do I hear a round of applause from the bullpen? Peace, gang.

Richard Guion

10 Dunwick Pl.

Corpus Christi, Tx. 78411

The round of applause is yours, Rich—and we'd just like to amend one of your observations. It's *not* just in the lives of superheroes that there comes a time to stop and re-evaluate and seek new or renewed motivations—it's in the lives of *all* of us.

And this may come as a slight surprise, but Artful Archie is going to do precisely as you suggest—by scripting an original kung fu short story sometime in the future. Titled "The Price," it's being penciled by Energetic Ed Hannigan from a germ idea by Archie. We're not even gonna try to predict when it'll eventually appear—just be warned that it's definitely in the works!

Dear Bill and George:

I cannot believe what you have done. As of DEADLY HANDS #19, the Sons of the Tigers are dissolved, to follow their own individual destinies. As a confirmed Marvel collector, I am somewhat displeased, and cannot see the need for separating the team comprised of Abe Brown, Bob Diamond and Lin Sun. I'm sure the White Tiger will definitely prove interesting, but was all this really necessary. I prefer the group.

Part two of the Iron Fist serial, "Soul Slayer," lived up to expectation. The more I see of Iron Fist, the more I become aware of the maturation of an average strip into excellence. Nice work, Chris and Rudy.

The interview with Chuck Norris was good, but I would rather see straight text articles. As for the "Readers' Poll," leave it out, please—the space it occupied can be better utilized by printing more letters. How come the price increase. Getting greedy again?

Marty Castle

222 Greenkill Avenue

Kingston, NY

Marty, we're as concerned as the rest of you; in scarcely four years prices on everything from comics to paperbacks to a cup of coffee have doubled—and there's no end in sight. Nobody seems to know what to do about it, either, except to struggle along as



best they can. We fall into that category, Marty, and our price fluctuations are not a function of greed, but of necessity. A matter of survival. All that we ask is that you hang in there with us, and maybe—just maybe—we'll come through it intact.

My dear Marvelmen:

The cover of #20 was colorful, but I'm afraid the stylings of Mr. Barr have never particularly impressed me, and in this case I like them less than ever. His work makes your mag look cheap—there's just no getting around it. For the sake of hurting your feelings, I won't even mention the frontpiece!

Frankly, I'm amazed you've been able to publish DEADLY HANDS monthly for this long; it was among some of the early b&w titles I expected to disappear long before SAVAGE TALES and others. Mind you, I'm not complaining—I'm delighted that you've managed to make a success of what was, essentially, a passing fancy in the eye of the public. So congratulations on your 20th ish!

Please, though, use better art on the letters pages. I

note that you have a habit of picking up old illustrations from previous issues—but invariably the art looked better before you re-used it. Can't you do something? Again, it makes the mag look cheap.

I particularly enjoy Archie's editorials—and this time the pix of Norris, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were an extra added treat that delighted me no end.

Nebres art job on Iron Fist was his usual competent, power-packed stuff. The man knows how to capture a kung fu mood, no question of that. Chris has improved over the past two years as a scripter, but in my opinion he has at least that much more improvement to go until he approaches full Marvel competency. Still, he's coming along nicely.

Jim Whitmore did his usual professional and interesting job on the Norris interview. The feature was interesting; though I'm not especially enamored of Chuck Norris, I found his opinions made intriguing reading. I always enjoy the article section. More! More!

And this is perhaps the strangest confession of all. Since the very start of Bill Mantlo's scripting days at Marvel, I have not been impressed. In fact, I have been rather disgruntled, and oft-times downright angry at his lack of concern for the English language. But with the start of the White Tiger saga, I find that the occasional lapses of grammar have grown less frequent, and the story and characterizations far more interesting. Bravo! Of course, I've always liked George Perez's artwork.

Keep on keepin' on, and all that.

Raymond O. Stanton

113 Sorsar Circle

Balcon, MN 68015

Hey, Ray, don't tell anyone—but we're amazed that we've been able to pull off DEADLY HANDS for this long, too! And we're more than mildly pleased, since as we mentioned in #20, this is one of our very favorite b&w mags to work on—and one that we would sincerely miss if it were cancelled.

As for other matters this month, if you've flipped ahead, then you've already noticed that we didn't have nearly enough room to bring you the complete movie section that we mentioned an issue or two ago, so we've compromised by breaking the material into two and presenting part now and part in our very next number.

Okay, kung fu commentators, now it's our turn to hear from *you*. Remember, we want to know what you think about this issue—plaudits and put-downs. Our address:

DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU:

Marvel Magazine Group

575 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10022



AND THEN THERE'S THE ONE ABOUT THE KARATEKA WHO CATCHES BULLETS IN HIS TEETH WHILE WHISTLING THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF THE BRANDENBURG CONCERTO...!

Hi! Archie Goodwin, who usually occupies this space, is taking a much needed breather for a month and asked me to step in in his stead. He'll be back next month, but for now you're going to have to put up with me.

As you can see, our special movie issue we've been building up to for the past few issues is finally here—sort of. It has turned into a monster, far exceeding our page count limitations, forcing us to split the film section and spread it over two issues. Perhaps we're overly verbose, a little self-indulgent. But we aren't so much critics as we are analysts. Besides which, Don McGregor still hasn't shown up with his examination of Tom Laughlin and *THE MASTER GUNFIGHTER*. It's nice to know that some things are consistent around here (just kidding, Don)!

We're no longer having to put up with the glut of quickie-packaged imports that flooded the market when the martial arts sensation first broke on the unsuspecting media in early 1973, but the genre is most definitely settled in and here to stay. It has thoroughly influenced and is still influencing the action-oriented entertainment industry. One outstanding example of this occurred to me while viewing Sidney Pollack's latest, *THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR*. It is not a martial arts film, per se, but there is one particular scene wherein a free-lance assassin and ex-C.I.A. agent (disguised as a mailman, no less—is nothing sacred) attempts to kill Robert Redford. Although the assassin enters with an automatic weapon, Redford quickly disarms him with a pot of semi-heated water to the face. At which point the assassin resorts to very effective unarmed karate (a la Green Berets) technique. Admittedly, director Pollack, who earlier this year turned out what, in my opinion, is the finest martial arts film since the genre began, a film titled *THE YAKUZA*, cares about his details and must, at least marginally, be concerned with the martial arts. But I still couldn't help thinking how that scene would have been done even five years ago, with sluggish, perhaps clumsy "Queen's English" (though, to be fair, if the scene had good editing you might not notice the sluggishness so outstandingly). Or, perhaps, you might get some unconvincing perversions of Judo, a grunty throw a la *The Avengers*

(Brian Clemens', not Stan Lee's). Even a film like *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE*, which was certainly an exception in its time, used the ninja training school as a visual/plot gimmick, delivering little martial arts action on the screen outside of tokenism.

It appears that the martial arts in the media is here to stay—and you can read about it in this and next issue's article sections. Because, right now I'd like to just talk about articles in general—a kind of state of the union message, as it were (being written in mid-January, no less)—and perhaps solicit comments from our audience at large.

It has been just about a year since I moved up to Associate Editor and took the reigns of the articles. Since that time I've been experimenting with different approaches and various topics dealing in varying degrees with the martial arts both in the media, as entertainment, and in the dojo/kwoon, as a way of life. And I've been attempting to learn who our audience is and exactly how far we can experiment with the articles.

Bruce Lee is always a welcome subject, though one to tread lightly with. The man generated respect and admiration in his time the like of which is rarely seen. It is easy on one hand for the accountants to say "Bruce Lee sells magazines", but the readers will not tolerate a rip-off. And, frankly, I'd like to think we haven't given them one.

Our special personality pieces and interviews seem to be popular. Reaction was very strong to the Robert Clouse, Jhoon Rhee and Chuck Norris pieces. I've also experimented with technical articles, technical but not esoteric, and people also seem to enjoy these. And, of course, our film features, such as this issue, seem to be ever popular.

Gee, everything's comin' up roses . . .

Not exactly. Response seems to indicate that we should feel free to experiment and try different things. Well and good—we wouldn't want it any other way. But response doesn't indicate which things in our experimentation hit the mark with you and which things fail.

The problem is this. The die-hard comics fans, our most vocal faction, may be only peripherally interested in the articles, as is their interest in martial arts. They aren't a

majority, but they are the ones who, as they do to all the comics, write the majority of letters. And we're happy to hear from them. But the rest of the audience—the readers interested in the martial arts and the people who are interested in *both* the comics and the martial arts (to varying degrees)—are the less vocal and sometimes downright *silent* majority. Which makes it difficult to gauge what we're doing right or wrong.

For those relatively few (about one or two letters every few months) who would like to see the articles removed and replaced with cover to cover comics, we can't. And we don't think we'd really want to, nor do we think most of our audience would want us to. But you can have a voice in the kinds of articles we present and that voice will be listened to.

So write. We want to hear from you—all of you.

As for what we have already in the works, besides part two of our look at martial arts movies, there is a very extensive and informative interview with screenwriter Sterling Silliphant, one of Bruce Lee's most successful Western students; some follow-up articles and interviews revolving around the new Bruce Lee bio-pic by Robert (ENTER *THE DRAGON*) Clouse (after much delay, they finally found someone to play Bruce Lee and are in production), and even an indepth look at martial arts and stuntwork in film. We also have some upcoming personality pieces spotlighting real-world martial arts luminaries as Fred Hamilton and William Louie.

And, starting next month, each issue will contain a new special feature, a short review column to call your attention to people, places and media events that, although they deserve your attention, may not warrant whole articles by themselves. Dave Kraft, otherwise known as Dave the Dude, has been at work for several months now preparing and co-ordinating the feature, setting up contacts and all the other countless things needed to maintain such a column. We think you'll be pleased.

We hope you'll let us know!

—JOHN WARNER

IRON FIST

PART 5

BRIDGE OF

BRIDGE OF

SORROW PAIN

GET OUT OF OUR
WAY, SILVER DRAGON--
JADE AND I HAVE COME
TOO FAR TO BE
STOPPED NOW...

...BUT IF I HAVE
TO GO THRU **YOU** TO
GET TO DHASHA KHAN,
THEN **SO BE IT**--!

HOW **DRAMATIC**,
IRON FIST,
HOW SUITABLY
HEROIC...

... HOW
TRAGICALLY...
STUPID!

FOR **ONCE** IN
YOUR BRIEF LIFE,
YOUNG ONE, **THINK**
BEFORE YOU ACT.

BECAUSE, HERE AND
NOW, YOU STAND ON THE
K'U-CH'U-CH'IAO-- THE
BRIDGE OF PAIN. BELOW US
FLOWS THE **HOW-NAI-HO**, THE
RIVER OF THE DAMNED.

AND **SPIRIT** THOUGH YOU ARE,
SHOULD YOU--OR **I**, FOR THAT
MATTER--DIE ON THIS BRIDGE,
THEN WE SHALL **TRULY DIE**. NO
REBIRTH, REINCARNATION, FENG-TU,
HEAVEN, HELL, NIRVANA--**NOTHING**.
COMPLETE, UTTER, TOTAL
NON-EXISTENCE!

OH, ONE **FINAL** THING--
IF WE FIGHT ON **THIS**
BRIDGE, IRON FIST,
THEN IT MUST BE A
FIGHT... TO THE **DEATH**.

THE CHOICE
IS **YOURS**.



MEMORIES... **STACCATO IMAGES**
CASCADING ACROSS YOUR MIND'S EYE...
INTRUSIVE IMAGES, DISTRACTING YOU
FROM SILVER DRAGON'S **CHALLENGE**...

IT HAD BEGUN IN NEW YORK, THE
NIGHT OF **DANIEL RAND'S** BIRTHDAY--
YOUR BIRTHDAY, IRON FIST-- BEGUN
WITH A WOMAN, **JADE**, AND TWO
DEMON SPIRITS SENT TO **CAPTURE**
HER...

... AND YET, IMAGES THAT
CANNOT BE IGNORED...

... YOU HAD **DEFEATED**
THOSE SPIRITS...

... AND YOUR "VICTORY" HAD LANDED BOTH YOU AND **JADE**
IN HELL, AT THE MERCY OF **DHASHA KHAN**, USURPER
LORD OF **FENG-TU**, THE LEGENDARY, MYSTERIOUS LAND
OF THE **DEAD**...

YOU'D TRIED TO **STOP** HIM,
HAD FACED THE DEMON
SOULSLAYER, AND
DESTROYED IT...

KHAN'S GOAL WAS **SIMPLE**-- HE
WANTED **JADE'S SOUL**, THE
SOUL OF THE IMMORTAL **FIRE-
BIRD**, WHICH WAS WHAT **JADE**
REALLY WAS...

... BUT **KHAN**
HAD TAKEN
JADE'S SOUL
ANYWAY...

... AND THEN, **BOWMAN**-- **JADE'S**
PALADIN, HER SWORN PROTECTOR--
HAD **KILLED** YOU...

... SO THAT YOU COULD
FACE **DHASHA KHAN**
ACCORDING TO THE
LAWS AND CUSTOMS
OF **FENG-TU'S**...
REALITY...

YOU HADN'T REALLY **UNDERSTOOD**, BUT
THEN, YOU HADN'T REALLY BEEN GIVEN
MUCH **CHOICE**...

... AND THE **HELL** OF IT
IS THAT HAD THEY
SIMPLY **ASKED** FOR
YOUR HELP, YOU WOULD
HAVE **AGREED**...
FOR THE MOST
BASIC REASON
OF ALL...

... YOU ARE IN **LOVE**
WITH **JADE**, AND
SHE WITH **YOU**...

AND **NOW** YOU'RE
GOING TO START
PAYING THE
PRICE FOR
THAT LOVE...

KAAAIIII!!!

KROOO

YOUR THOUGHTS HAVE
ONLY TAKEN A **SPLIT-
INSTANT** OF TIME,
IRON FIST...

... BUT THAT **SPLIT-
INSTANT** IS **ALL** THAT
SILVER DRAGON **NEEDS**...

AND YET, A BLOW
THAT **SHOULD**
HAVE KILLED,
HASN'T...

YOU'RE **SLOW**,
CHILD OF THE
GODS, **FAR**
TOO SLOW...

...IS THIS
TO BE A
FIGHT, OR A
MASSACRE--?
YOU WERE MORE
TROUBLE TO ME
WHEN YOU WERE
BLIND!

AND YOU **TALK**
TOO MUCH,
WOMAN!

BUT **WHERE** HAVE I HEARD
IT BEFORE-- WHERE **COULD**
I HAVE HEARD IT--?

GOOD. MY
FOREARM PARRY
PUT HER **OFF-**
BALANCE...

...NOW IF
I CAN JUST GET
IN A **FAST WHEEL**
KICK...

KHUF!

DRAGON'S BONES--!
HER MASK TOOK THE
BRUNT OF MY BLOW--
SHE'S RECOVERING
TOO FAST...

...FOLLOW IT UP
WITH A **HEEL PALM**
TO SILVER
DRAGON'S JAW...

...THEN MAYBE I
CAN **END** THIS MATCH
QUICKLY-- AND
NOBODY'LL NEED
TO DIE...!

AARRRGH!

KRAK!

NICE
TRY--
IRON FIST--
BUT YOU'LL
HAVE TO DO
BETTER
THAN THAT
IF YOU
INTEND TO
SURVIVE
THIS
BATTLE.

MUCH
BETTER!



GIVE UP, IRON FIST--
LET DHASHA KHAN
HAVE THE **HARLOT'S**
SOUL AND BE **DONE**
WITH IT--!

I **BEG** YOU, CHILD...
GIVE UP BEFORE IT'S
TOO LATE, BEFORE
WE GO **TOO FAR**.

N-NO...!



YOU...
FOOL--!

I'M RISKING **MY**
SOUL BY
OFFERING YOU THIS
CHANCE... AND IT'S
AN OFFER
I'LL NOT
MAKE **TWICE!**

YOU HAVEN'T A **PRAYER**
ON THIS BRIDGE, DON'T
YOU **SEE** THAT--?

THIS IS A
KILLING
GROUND, AND
YOU DON'T HAVE
KILLING **IN YOU!**
YOU STILL BELIEVE
IN THE SANCTITY,
THE VALUE OF
LIFE.

EVEN AS A SPIRIT, **YOU**
CANNOT
KILL!

AND... YOU...
CAN...
MI-LADY...?



YES!!

SOMEHOW,
MILADY, I **DON'T**
THINK SO...



TBAH!



DAMN THAT MASK OF HERS-- THAT'S THE SECOND TIME IT'S **BLUNTED** THE FORCE OF MY BLOWS...

...AND WITH MY RIGHT ARM NEXT TO **USELESS**, I MAY NOT GET A **THIRD TRY**...

YOU'RE **SLOWING DOWN**, CHILD...AND YOU'RE **HURT**...

...IT SEEMS THAT WHEN JADE CHOSE **YOU**, SHE CHOSE A **POOR CHAMPION** INDEED...

HUUU--



YAAHHH--!!

THE FIGHT'S NOT OVER **YET**, SILVER DRAGON--

--HOLD YOUR **VICTORY CELEBRATION** WHEN IT IS, WHEN YOU'VE **WON**--!

HOLD IT **THEN**, LADY--

BUT NOT NOW!!

WHOD!

KOW!



BRAVE WORDS,
MY LOVE...BUT
THAT'S ALL THEY
ARE...

YOU'RE HURT,
DANNY--EVEN IF
YOU DEFEAT SILVER
DRAGON, HOW
CAN YOU HOPE TO
DEFEAT HER
MASTER...?



AND THAT MEANS
IT'S ALL OVER--ALL
THE HOPES, ALL THE
BRIGHT DREAMS...

DHASHA KHAN
WILL WIN--HE'LL
KEEP MY SOUL AND
DAMN MANKIND'S
FOREVER.



BUT THE WORST THING IS THAT
DANNY'S SACRIFICE--HIS LIFE,
NOW HIS IMMORTAL SOUL--WILL
HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING.

AND IT'S
MY FAULT!
MY FAULT!



YOU SOUND
SURPRISED,
JADE...

AFTER ALL THE
COUNTLESS
AEONS, DO YOU
STILL NOT UNDER-
STAND THAT THE
FORCES OF GOOD
MUST EVER FALL
TO THOSE OF
DARKNESS?

AS YOU FALL
TO ME, NOW.



WATCH IT, DANIEL--
SILVER DRAGON'S COMING
UP BEHIND YOU...

THAT SCREAM
--IT'S JADE--!

AAAA
EEEE!!



OKAY, THE LADY'S
FAST AND DEADLY--
SO YOU'VE GOT TO
BE THAT MUCH
FASTER...

SHUUU--!!

AND YOU'VE GOT
TO BE PERFECT...

...EVERY
TIME.

KEEE--!!

THOD!

BRAK!



"THAT ACCURSED BOWMAN TOOK THE MAIN GATE, HELD IT OPEN FOR THE BULK OF TUAN'S HOST--EVEN NOW, HE LEADS THEM AGAINST US..."





IT CAN'T BE, BUT IT IS. AND THE PICTURES SNAP TOGETHER IN YOUR MIND...

...HEATHER RAND'S FACE...

ONE...

WHAT HAD LORN TUAN SAID: "DHASHA KHAN TOOK ONE FROM AMONG US... AND MADE HER HIS SLAVE."

M-MOM? IS IT YOU, REALLY YOU...?

...SILVER DRAGON'S FACE...

...AND THE SAME.

MOM?





...HER SCREAM IS A TERRIBLE THING TO HEAR, THE SCREAM OF AN ANIMAL IN MORTAL PAIN, OF A MIND AND BODY THAT HAVE BORNE TOO MUCH AND CAN BEAR NO MORE...



...OF A WOMAN LOST FOR SO MANY YEARS, WHO HAS FOUND HERSELF AGAIN.

SHE WAS BORN HEATHER DUNCAN, ONLY CHILD OF ONE AMERICA'S MOST POWERFUL MERCHANT FAMILIES...

...AND FOR TWENTY-FOUR YEARS, SHE HAD EVERYTHING HER HEART DESIRED...AND WAS CONTENT WITH THAT...

UNTIL THE DAY SHE MET A MAN SHE WOULD HAVE GLADLY THROWN AWAY HER FORTUNE FOR, A MAN WHO LOVED HER FOR HERSELF, AS MUCH AS SHE LOVED HIM.

WENDELL RAND.

...DANIEL THOMAS (MIDDLE NAME FOR HER FATHER, FIRST BECAUSE IT SOUNDED NICE) RAND.

FOR A TIME, ALL WAS WELL. HEATHER HAD A SON TO RAISE AND WENDELL HAD RAND-MEACHUM-- THAT WAS ENOUGH.

THEY WERE MARRIED AND THE NEXT YEAR, HEATHER BORE HIM A SON...

OR WAS IT? OUT OF LOVE, SHE FOLLOWED WENDELL IN SEARCH OF THE LEGENDARY PARADISE ON EARTH, K'UN-LUN--WITHOUT REALLY UNDERSTANDING WHY THEY HAD TO GO...

SHE WATCHED HER HUSBAND DIE--AND MUCH OF HER DIED WITH HIM...

AND IN THE END, SHE DIED HERSELF...



AAAIIIRGH!

DON'T TRY TO REMEMBER JUST NOW--THERE WILL BE TIME ENOUGH FOR THAT...

...BUT YOUR CLOTHES, IN ALL THE AEONS SINCE THE CRASH, I HAVE NEVER SEEN THEIR LIKE IN K'UN-LUN.

GOOD MORROW, LADY MENG. I AM TOLD YOU HAVE A PROBLEM...

TRUE ENOUGH, LORD TUAN--THIS LADY ARRIVED LAST NIGHT, YET SHE CLAIMS SHE IS NOT OF K'UN-LUN.

BE STILL, MY CHILD. ALL IS WELL--THE PAIN OF TRANSITION IS PAST. YOUR SOUL AND FORM ARE WHOLE ONCE MORE.

WHA--? I...DON'T UNDERSTAND...WHAT IS THIS PLACE? WHAT...HAPPENED...

K'UN-LUN? I'M NOT FROM K'UN-LUN; I'M...

HEART OF THE DRAGON, HOW COULD THIS BE...?

PLEASE, YOU MUST HELP ME. MY HUSBAND WAS...HE WAS MURDERED, AND MY SON...

...MY SON'S WANDERING AROUND THESE MOUNTAINS, LOST, ALONE. HE COULD BE HURT...

THIS IS THE TERRAN WIFE OF MY SON, MENG--HOW IN THE DRAGON'S NAME CAME SHE TO FENG-TU? THIS IS NOT HER TIME!

YOUR SON IS WELL...

OH, THANK GOD! IS HE HERE? CAN I SEE HIM?

I AM SORRY, WIFE OF MY SON--BUT YOU WILL NEVER SEE YOUR SON AGAIN. HOW CAN YOU...?

HE IS ALIVE...

...YOU ARE NOT.

PLEASE, YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE...

MY NAME...MY NAME IS HEATHER RAND.

THERE IS NO HEATHER RAND ON OUR LIST, TUAN.

DAMN YOUR LIST!

I AM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. MY NAME IS HEATHER RAND--LISTEN TO ME, PLEASE!--MY HUSBAND'S NAME IS WENDELL RAND...

YOU'RE MAD!

I WISH IT WERE SO, BUT I WILL NOT LIE TO YOU, LADY. THIS PLACE IS FENG-TU, THE LAND OF THE DEAD--ALL WHO RESIDE HERE ARE SHADES.

YOU ARE A SHADE. MENG, GIVE THE CHILD SOME OF YOUR MI-HUN-T'ANG. IT SHOULD CALM HER.

NO!

YOU'RE CRAZY, BOTH OF YOU. I'M ALIVE, I TELL YOU--ALIVE!

ARE YOU? THEN WHOSE NECK DID THE WOLVES SNAP, MILADY?

THE OLD MAN WAS LYING--
HE HAD TO BE-- BUT...

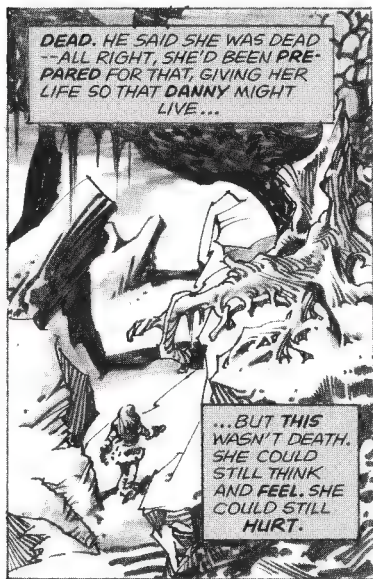
GOD OF US ALL, THE
MEMORY OF THOSE
JAWS CLOSING ON HER
THROAT. THE SILENCE
...THE PEACE...

...HOW COULD
SHE DENY
THAT?



DEAD. HE SAID SHE WAS DEAD
--ALL RIGHT, SHE'D BEEN PRE-
PARED FOR THAT, GIVING HER
LIFE SO THAT DANNY MIGHT
LIVE...

...BUT THIS
WASN'T DEATH.
SHE COULD
STILL THINK
AND FEEL. SHE
COULD STILL
HURT.



SHE WANTED HER MAN AND HER
CHILD...NEEDED THEM DES-
PERATELY...

...AND THEY WERE
NOWHERE TO BE
FOUND...

...IT WAS AS IF THE LIVING
HEART HAD BEEN TORN FROM HER
BODY...SO MUCH HOLLOWNESS IN-
SIDE...SO MUCH GRIEF...OH GOD,
SHE WOULD GIVE HER SOUL IF IT
WOULD TAKE THE PAIN AWAY...



IS THE PAIN TOO MUCH FOR
YOU, LITTLE ONE...? I CAN
END IT FOR YOU--NO MORE
GRIEF, NO MORE PAIN. FOR
THE REST OF TIME, WOULD
YOU LIKE THAT?

WHAT...?
HOW...?



JUST GAZE INTO MY CRYSTAL,
HEATHER RAND...

ONE LOOK IS ALL
THAT'S REQUIRED...
FOR DHASHA KHAN'S
TRAP TO BE
SPRUNG...

N-NNNOOO...



TOO LATE, SPIRIT, MY
CRYSTAL IS A GREEDY THING,
AND IT DOES NOT GIVE BACK
THE SOULS IT STEALS.

BE HONORED, THOUGH.
FOR YOU WILL SHARE THIS
PRISON WITH ONLY ONE
OTHER SOUL: THE FIRE-
BIRD'S.



IRONIC, THAT THE MOTHER OF
THE IRON FIST-TO-BE WILL SERVE
AS BODYGUARD TO THE MAN WHO
WILL DESTROY EARTH AND
K'UN-LUN BOTH.

IN HONOR OF THAT,
I WILL NAME THEE
FOR THE HOLIEST
SYMBOLS IN YU-TI'S
HATED LAND...I
WILL NAME THEE...

...SILVER
DRAGON!



DHARSHA KHAN HAD KEPT HIS WORD--GIVE HIM THAT, AT LEAST--BECAUSE FROM THAT DAY FORTH, SHE'S FELT NOTHING, REMEMBERED ...NOTHING.

UNTIL...
NOW.

DAMN YOUR HARLOT'S SOUL TO HELL--

--KILL HIM!!

D-DANNY--!

BY ALL THE DAMNED GODS, SHE'S **BROKEN** MY SPELL--!

SHE KNOWS WHO SHE IS!

MOM!

OH MY SON, MY SON-- HOW YOU'VE ...GROWN.

DANNY, I...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S REALLY YOU. THAT THIS IS HAPPENING.

HOLD ME TIGHT, MY SON--I'M HALF- AFRAID THIS IS A DREAM AND THAT WHEN I WAKE UP, YOU'LL BE GONE.

YOU HAVE **BETRAYED** ME, SILVER DRAGON--!

KNOW YOU NOW THAT THERE IS **ONE** PENALTY FOR SUCH A BETRAYAL, AND **ONE** ALONE.

AND THAT PENALTY IS...





YOU'LL FIND IT A **HARD** LIFE TO TAKE, STRIPLING--

--FOR I HAVE ARTS MARTIAL AND ARCANES AT MY COMMAND. IF ONE DOESN'T STOP YOU...

...THE OTHER **SURELY** WILL!



EH--?! I MISSED...!

BUT HOW--?!

--YOU'VE **HAD** YOUR CHANCE, DHASHA KHAN--

KDOW!



--NOW IT'S **MY** TURN!



BROD!

HAAIII--!



PERHAPS IT **IS**, IRON FIST--BUT I'LL NOT FIGHT YOU IN FENG-TU, ON THIS BRIDGE OF THE DAMNED--!

IF YOU WANT ME DEAD, YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME ON **MY** TERMS, ON A BATTLEGROUND OF **MY** CHOOSING!



YOU'LL HAVE
TO FACE ME ON
EARTH, FOOL

ON A
BATTLEFIELD
WHERE I AM
FLESH-AND-
BLOOD--

--AND YOU
ARE NOTHING
BUT A
GHOST!!

NOOOOOO!!

IS THIS, THEN, HOW THE
WORLD ENDS? NOT WITH
A BANG, OR A WHIMPER,
BUT WITH A DEMON WAR-
LORD'S LAUGH...

...AND A HERO'S
SCREAM OF HELP-
LESS IMPOTENT
RAGE...?

**NEXT
ISSUE:
THE
FINAL
DUEL!**

KILLERS IN REVIEW

In Pursuit Of Sam Peckinpah, The Martial Arts And Other Variations Of A Theme.



A critical examination of United Artist's film THE KILLER ELITE...

Something went wrong... and I'm not altogether sure where.

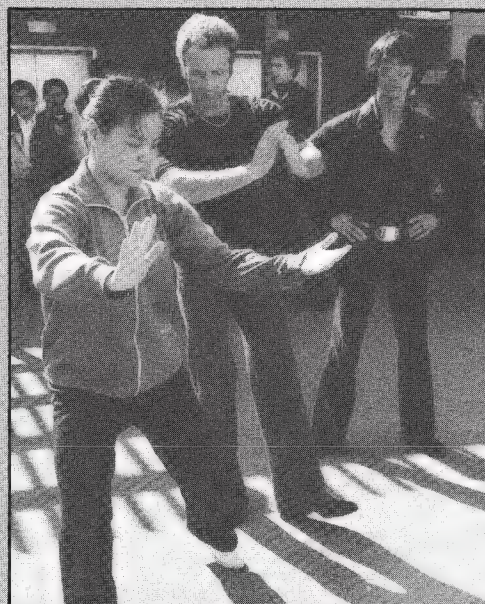
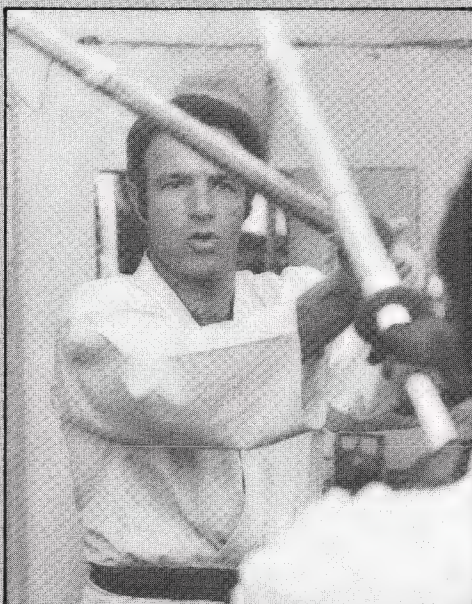
The ingredients seemed right. The use of current C.I.A. paranoia themes to create a real plot (or at least a substantial premise) and background for a martial arts film; a script by Sterling Silliphant, who is both writer and martial artist; a good cast headed up by James Caan and Robert Duval; and a virtual army of excellent West Coast martial artists. Take all these ingredients, stir in a Jerry Fielding sound track, and put the reigns in the hands of action-director Sam Peckinpah, and everything should come out just fine.

But it didn't. And the reasons, and just the ones that are visible enough to conjecture about, mind you, are varied and complex—and *puzzling*.

The film actually starts out fairly well, although, even at this point, something feels amiss. Peckinpah has his ups and downs; within a film, structurally, as well as from film to film. But, for as long as I've been watching the works of this man, one element has almost always been consistent. Sam Peckinpah has a strong cinematic sense, a feeling for the importance of the technical end of filmmaking and the use of that technology to the advantage of the overpowering visual element of the film. I'm not trying to slight cinematographers or directors of photography or any of the other virtual legions necessary in creating a motion picture. But Peckinpah is a stylist, as is (but not always in the same sense) a Kubrick or a Ken Russell. So it was that I began to feel uneasy as I noticed that some of the technical aspects, the photography and color, seemed a bit below par. Not bad. Excellent "B" film quality. But even when he makes a "B" film (and there's no particular crime in a film being a "B" film) he gives them an "A" film gloss and the visuals have verve.

The precredit sequence is done, without visuals or sound, in titles, relating a supposed interview with someone in intelligence concerning the C.I.A. utilizing a free-lance intelligence network to carry out, if not actual dirty work (i.e. assassinations, you name it), work soiled enough that the C.I.A. would rather not be (known to be) involved (i.e. seeing that a prominent third world political figure marked for assassination by opposing factions doesn't "get it" while in the United States — what happens to him after that isn't their concern). After the agent effectively denies everything, he is asked if he would admit to it if it were true. The answer is a flat and unimbellished "No." With that, we cut to the credits, which run over a sequence of several Communications Integrity Associates (the aforementioned free-lance intelligence network) agents, including James Caan and Robert Duvall, laying explosives in the basement of some building. The scene is played with the same sort of mechanical esthetic and technical infatuation which the 007 films and *Mission Impossible* made popular and which has become to media spy missions what foreplay is to sexual encounters.

It is a good beginning for the film, as I said. And, aside from the aforementioned lack of total cinematic visual



lustre, it is effectively played. The sequence neatly ends as the camera isolates a bird nest located somewhere on the building. We see the birds are going about their usual bird-like activities as two words, *Directed by*, appear on the screen just above and to one side of the nest. Cut to exterior shot with the camera tracking back, staying with a car which Caan and company are fleeing the building in. Then back to the bird nest; the building detonates (and rather impressively) as the name Sam Peckinpah appears on the screen. The pacing-editing is well done, and if the visual message seems a bit heavy-handed, it is only Peckinpah establishing his thematic territory. It is the single most prevalent theme that ties all of his work together, including, whether by coincidence or not, his rewrite for Don Siegel of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*.

The theme is summed up in the phrase "the rape of innocents"—something not to be confused with "rape of innocence". The "innocents" which are always there in any Peckinpah film are never anything more than victims. They may live or they may die or they may just suffer. But one gets the impression that they never learn anything and one wonders if they are even capable of re-evaluating their environment, much less their own lives. Peckinpah seems interested in presenting his audiences with a picture of themselves without embellishment. It is a flat statement, through his perceptions, of what we are. He neither sits above it all nor offers suggestions or alternatives. Peckinpah is neither a moralist nor a philosopher. He is a landscape artist—the landscape of humanity. If you don't agree with his particular coloration of that landscape, it doesn't matter, either to him or to your participation in any of his films.

The establishing of familiar territory at the beginning

of *THE KILLERS ELITE* was, at least, encouraging.

Unfortunately, it was downhill from there. Not all downhill. As I will be pointing out, the film has moments. But they are few and far between and dim terribly next to what has gone awry with this film.

I should take a moment here to establish my own personal criterion for analysis and judgement on this film and for this magazine. I am trying to consider this film, in order to be as fair as possible, on three different levels; as a film, as a Sam Peckinpah film and, most importantly, at least to this magazine, as a martial arts film. Under most circumstances I like all three to varying degrees.

It is sad that this film's failures come on all three levels. And it is sadder still that its biggest failure is on the level of being a martial arts film!

But more on that later...

The man who was rescued in the credits-detonation sequence is taken to a special hide-out kept by Com-Teg Associates, complete with surveillance cameras and what have you. Mike Locken (James Caan) and George Hansen (Robert Duval) arrive for their shift the next morning after a tedious (for the film audience) night of formula macho bedroom humor (I use the latter term loosely), getting drunk and getting laid.

(It is interesting to note, in lieu of scenes prevalent in spy films of the agents and their cosmic decadence, a story that ran in *The Washington Post* sometime in December revealing that, corruption or no, government agencies (i.e. the C.I.A., the F.B.I., etc) are moralistically prudish with their personnel to a fanatical degree and you can be blacklisted from ever holding a government or security job again anywhere for merely having premarital sexual relations with a fiancée!)

Mike and George take over the watch (on a console

lined with monitor screens). Mike goes into the locker room at the rear to shower.

Having become increasingly bored by the noisy, busy pointlessness of the scenes between the credits and this point, my expectations were again picking up. This scene is actually handled quite well, with the man Com-Teg is protecting spouting weary (because he is) political rhetoric and Hansen displaying the cynical and cruelly unsympathetic humor of the mercenary he is, to whom no political or humanistic cause is worth more than what one side or the other might pay him to do their dirty work for them. All the while, unnoticed by the man in custody, Hansen is preparing a hand gun with a silencer.

The scene is well paced. We know what Hansen is going to do, and yet, when he turns suddenly and does it, we are shocked. Hansen wheels in his chair. There is the soft *Fa-thut* of the gun firing. The bullet penetrates cleanly into the other man's temple and emerges out the other side not so cleanly. It is well played, if unsettling.

Locken emerges from the shower to find Hansen sitting in the locker room, gun pointed at the floor, silencer still affixed. Again, the pacing is at work and, after the previous scene, I'm almost ready to exonerate the film of all its crimes.

Again, we know what Hansen is going to do—and you almost suspect Locken does too, but that his mind won't let him admit it. He definitely knows something is amiss and moves helplessly about the locker room, knowing

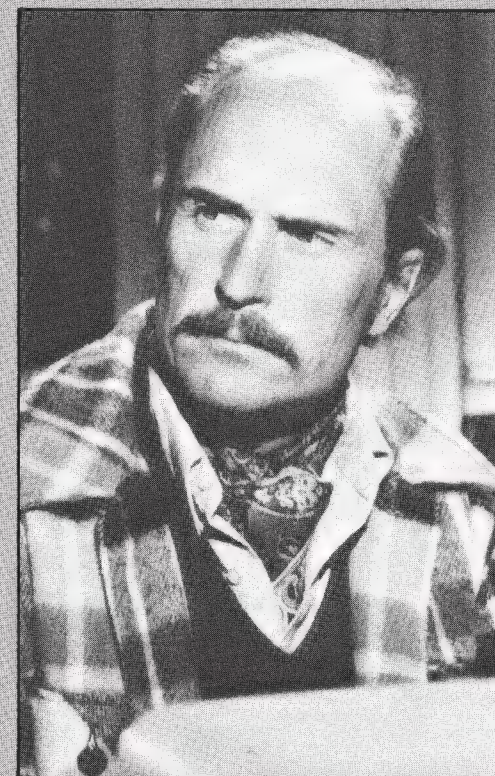
that there is nothing really to be done but searching desperately for a way to do it. And then Hansen raises the muzzle of his gun and aims directly for Locken. Two shots, keenly calculated. One enters at the elbow, one at the knee. Locken sprawls painfully on the floor.

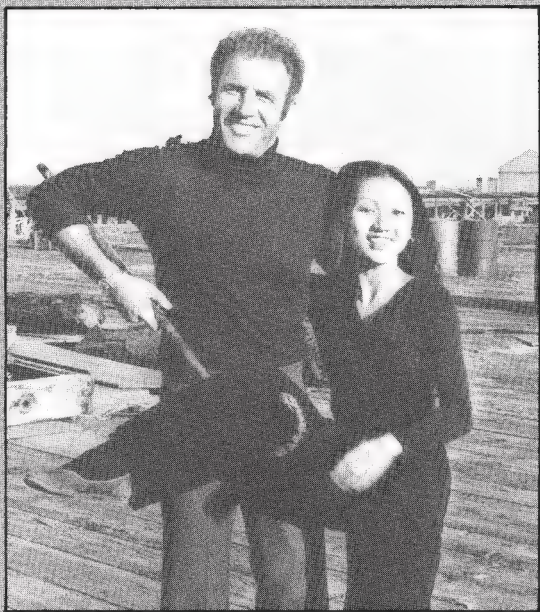
"You've just been retired." Hansen comments without either relish or humor. It is almost a plea—he knows he is leaving behind a wounded animal and that, to be safe, he should kill the "animal". But if there is no humanitarianism or morality between these two mercenaries, there is an inescapable bond formed of comradeship in the field and under fire. It may not be strong enough to keep one from defecting, but it can make Hansen wistfully hope he doesn't have to kill someone for whom he feels this bond of respect that he'll never feel for any employer. And so, George Hansen exits.

Unfortunately, George Hansen isn't all that exits at this point. For, while the film will continue to have brief moments, they will be few, and pacing becomes non-existent at this point. And that is unfortunate. After the previous scenes, my spirits were up. I had hopes.

But one thing does enter at this point—the martial arts.

The following is a quote from an interview with James Caan published in the February 1976 issue of *Playboy* magazine (copyright 1975 by Playboy):





CAAN: *Karate. That's where you take a board and break a guy's arm with it, right? I know all about that stuff. Like jujitsu. You see, I'm half a Jew, so I just needed the jitsu. I got a big start on that game.*

PLAYBOY: *Did it ever do you any good?*

CAAN: *Being Jewish?*

PLAYBOY: *Learning karate and jujitsu.*

CAAN: *Are you kidding? I never learned any of that. I learned the art of self-defense Sunny-side style. That's where if a guy throws a punch at you, you hit him with a brick. Or even better, hit him with it first. I wrote away to one of those courses and that's what they said to do.*

A few qualifiers on the above quote, just to be fair. They are not talking about *THE KILLER ELITE* at

this point in the interview, although it becomes apparent that there is nothing to amend his attitude towards the martial arts in terms of the film elsewhere in the interview. And, it should be noted that the interview was done with very frivolous attitudes on the part of both parties, a mutual joke session, the kind of thing that, once started, is hard to stop.

There is nothing wrong with joking around with the martial arts. There is room, in amongst the disciplines, for a sense of humor. But there is a large difference between humor and disrespect.

My point in using the above quote is not so much to criticize Mr. Caan for his opinions, to which he's entitled, but to point up an attitude that seemed to pervade the film, *THE KILLERS ELITE*, and its portrayal (and often lack thereof) of the martial arts. If one were to take this film as definition, the martial arts and martial artists are either to be made fun of or shot.

Which is a strange slap across the face, considering that the film seems to be trying to utilize martial arts as its primary gimmick.

You see, after Locken is disabled, he is found and taken to a hospital where, although his life is saved, it is revealed that, indeed, he will never be able to handle another field mission. He will, in fact, be nothing more than a cripple. But Caan is determined and swears to become operative again. Which of course he does, with the help of an arm and leg brace and a young nurse, Amy (Katy Heflin). But, primarily, he becomes fit for action through a crash course in the martial arts.

All the while, Locken is being told not to come around the office, that he's an embarrassment and other assorted niceties.

We now cut to the film's first martial arts battle. If you want to call it that. It takes place at San Francisco Airport. We cut between the Airport and Locken's superiors (Arthur Hill and Gig Young) discussing a new case with a representative from the C.I.A. The conversation is supposed to be taking place *after* the events at the airport. A Formosan political figure lands at SFO and immediately he and his party are beset by attackers and their battle ensues across the airport. It's too bad it doesn't ensue on the movie screen.

This scene is so badly edited that you never really see any of the martial arts, just the results of its carnage. The people will barely be in position when we suddenly cut back to Com-Teg headquarters, then return to the scene just in time to see bodies strewn and convulsing.

The strange (and frustrating) thing about that is the fact that they shot the entire martial arts battle at length, which I saw when I went through two huge volumes of contact sheets on the film to select pictures. There it was, every punch, every kick, every grimace, on film—and now, inexplicably, on the cutting room floor.

Why?

It is as if the entire film, from the moment martial arts gets involved, has been geared at denying that they (the martial arts) are worth anyone's attention. But they are, paradoxically, such an integral part of this film that one must then conclude that the film is not worth our attention and the audience emerges feeling betrayed. In this, about the only scene wherein the martial arts are shown being effective, we are robbed of seeing what is happening.

Again, why? And who is responsible? Peckinpah?

(Continued on page 32)

KILLERS IN REVIEW

(Continued from page 30)

Whatever, we learn that the C.I.A. wants to make sure that the Formosan and his daughter survive their hold-over in the U.S. And one more thing—the group of assassins that is after him seems to be led by a mercenary agent. George Hansen.

Now, I was personally baffled by this turn of events and I was expecting it from what the publicity sheets had said before I screened the film. Why is Locken taken suddenly back into the organization to hunt George Hansen? From the time he was disabled they lectured him on accepting his retirement, that he'd never be able to function in the field to meet Com-Teg's demands. Towards the end, they had resorted to downright insulting humiliation, the typical I'll-call-you-don't-call-us sort of put off. Sure, he's become (supposedly) some overnight sensation in the martial arts, but they saw he was getting good and still they just shook their heads and returned to their martinis.

Even stranger, they not only put Locken back in the field out of the blue, but they give him *carte blanche* with the mission to a ridiculous degree, including picking his operatives, who turn out to be Miller (Bo Hopkins doing his usual weasel-faced psycho bits) and Mac (Burt Young playing a New Yorkish grease-monkey who isn't too swift on the uptake, seeming incapable of dealing with more than one thought at a time, who turns out to be a good shot with a chrome-plated, clip-loading .45 automatic). Together the three of them form a kind of pathological three stooges who seem to survive only because the world which Peckinpah has created for them to inhabit is made up of people who are as stupid and pathetic and empty as they are.

One begins to wonder if Sam Peckinpah has any respect for anything, much less the martial arts, left. He certainly doesn't seem to have any for his audience! And he doesn't let up.

Locken goes to pick up the political exile left to his dubious protection. In this scene we find ourselves subjected to not only sexism (which, at least, is not out of left field for Peckinpah) but blanket racism, which one realizes afterwards pervades the film. It is not so much the martial arts that the film is disrespectful towards—that's merely a symptom of the overall disease. The film seems to hypothesize that Orientals are nothing more than a joke and that Orientals taking themselves seriously are worth a good case of side cramps (and shoot them in the head afterwards, by the way).

Whether this attitude was consciously intended by the filmmakers is unimportant at this point. That's how it came out. And, personally, I am and was offended.

One of our major cases in point is the political leader's daughter, Tommie Chung (Tiana). Locken enters the room where the Formosan party is waiting and, thinking he is an intruding assassin, Tommie attacks him with her martial arts skill. She doesn't even land a good solid blow. Locken looks a bit dusted and, quite effortlessly (clumsily and with speeded up camerawork I might add) turns Tommy over his hip, gives her a swat on the behind and proceeds to ignore her.

And later on we're expected to swallow that she is trained in Ninjitsu?



It is said that before Tiana (who is Sterling Silliphant's wife; a young, earnest-looking when she's allowed to be, attractive Viet Nameese woman) came to Hollywood to act in films, she made a promise to Bruce Lee, whom she had known. She promised never to take a role that was demeaning to Orientals.

Either this young woman is one of the most insincere human beings around or she has a very bad estimation of what is demeaning to Orientals. Yet one also finds it hard to believe that her husband would write such a part for her or such a screenplay in general, considering his deep and confessed respect for Oriental philosophy, the martial arts and Bruce Lee.

Something is decidedly wrong here.

I later checked my notes and found a very curious item. In *THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #20*, you'll remember we printed the complete cast and credits for the *KILLER ELITE*. These were printed exactly as they appeared on the publicity sheets given to us at the time. Note one entry in particular: *Screenplay by Stirling Silliphant*.

Yet, strangely, two months later, when the film opened (it is curious to note that we screened the film nearly one week after it opened) there is a second writing credit added: *Screenplay by Marc Norman and Sterling Silliphant*. In that order.

It raises questions. Questions that may never be truly answered. The biggest is what this second writer's contribution to the final film? And where did he come in— before or after the film was shot? What of Silliphant's original was left intact?

I personally would like to believe there wasn't much. Maybe someday I'll find out.

There is not much to be accomplished by taking the recap of the film any further. It doesn't really have either plot or point beyond here and I've made just about every point I've wanted to with what plot there was. Except one point.

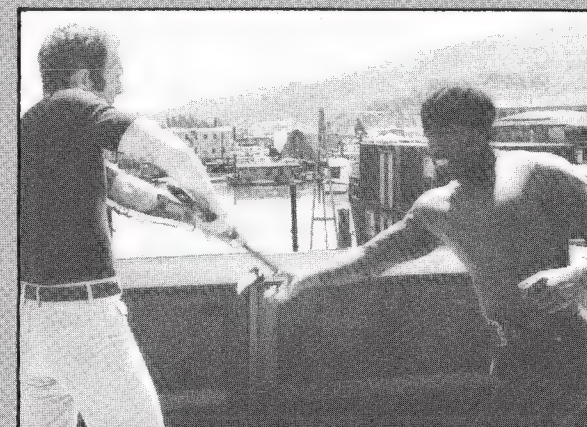
The film's biggest *structural* flaw was the lack of a good, properly menacing villain. George Hanson is never quite malevolent or aloof from the action enough to be, besides which he is killed about halfway through the film (and not even by Locken). The only other candidate for

top villain is the leader of a special ninja assassin attack force. Unfortunately, this film's attitude about both Orientals and the martial arts prevents you from taking him or his ninjas seriously.

However, for one last moment at the end, the film baits you into getting your hopes up.

We are set up for a final confrontation on a cluster of derelict ships out in a rusty little bay. Some good suspense is built up as we cut between Locken and company and silent ninjas, dressed in the same gray as is painted on these deserted ships, dart with amazing speed in and out of seclusion. Then, suddenly, they all leap out— only to be mostly mowed down by machine gun fire, the rest quickly and uneventfully taken out with a few routine moves on the part of Caan.

Screwed again!



Look, I'm not denying that any martial artist or martial artists going against a distant opponent armed with automatic firepower is going to find himself in trouble. But what was the point? Why did martial arts even enter into this film? Why did the studio pay out for all those martial artists to carefully choreograph scenes only to have them shot and their choreography end up on the cutting room floor? And what possible point can there be in setting up the martial arts as your gimmick only to keep aborting them?

And isn't it counter-productive to turn around and slap down the very audience you set out to exploit?

Perhaps the single most frustrating thing, for me, on a personal level, about *THE KILLER ELITE* is the fact that it is a Sam Peckinpah film, a man whose work I've admired in the past and whose failures even have had a certain amount of integrity to them.

Is this the same man who created *THE WILD BUNCH*, an action film that approaches so many different levels that it seems that I get something new out of it every time I see it? Is this the same man who made *STRAW DOGS*, a film that, while I'm not sure I'd ever sit through it a second time, I consider to be one of the important films of the last decade? Hell, is this even the same man who made *THE GETAWAY*, a flawed but downright entertaining "B" film?

Even *PAT GARRET AND BILLY THE KID*, which



I've considered up until now Peckinpah's worst film, retained style and Peckinpah's sense of cinema.

What went wrong?

I wish I had the answer.

In her book *KISS KISS BANG BANG* (published by Bantam Books by arrangement with Little, Brown and Company), Pauline Kael, in talking about the career of Orson Welles, mentions what happens in the establishment Hollywood when a film director attempts self-expression, not paying as much attention to deadline and cost sheets, straying from conventional ideas that have been accepted as commercially sound.

"...they [the consequences] are still happening to men in Hollywood like Sam Peckinpah. Such men are always blamed for the eventual failure of whatever remains of their work, while men who try for less have the successes (and are forgiven their routine failures because they didn't attempt anything the producers didn't understand)."

One wonders if Peckinpah, somewhere, found the odds just too great, that somewhere the fight that he invested in his folklore-like heroes left him. Somewhere it became pointless to struggle. He no longer has a personal statement to put down on film. Maybe he just no longer cares.

All of this is mere conjecture. But if Peckinpah's last three films, *THE KILLER ELITE* inclusive, are examples, he either has nothing left to say or he is so battered and weary he no longer has the strength to say it.

Maybe this is the only way he knows how to give the producers what they want.

By not caring.

—JOHN WARNER



THE DRAGON FLIES!

Reviewed by
David Anthony Kraft

Members of the media lead a sheltered life. Especially film reviewers, who are not expected to mingle with the throngs or to brave the dangers of 42nd Street in order to view the latest cinematic release offered up for their critical dissection. Private advance screenings—by invitation only—are usually set up for that purpose.

Even Kung Fu movies.

Occasionally, these events are overlooked or ignored—or the reviewer is out of town. Then, just like an ordinary citizen, he is forced to trollop down to a crowded and noisy theater, as I did on a recent sunny Sunday afternoon to see **THE DRAGON FLIES**.

What attracted my attention to this

latest in a long line of Kung Fu films was the presence of co-star George Lazenby; what held my attention was the utterly unexpected style and verve of this adventuresome piece.

The motion picture is co-produced by Golden Harvest, the studio which was responsible for several of the late Bruce Lee's most impressive martial arts classics, and producer Raymond Chow's name also appeared on the credits of **ENTER THE DRAGON**.

Of course, not only is **ENTER THE DRAGON** inarguably Bruce Lee's finest film, but it is also the epitome, the uncontested and unsurpassed masterpiece of Kung Fu flicks. Owing to Lee's oft-lamented death, there will never be another movie to rival it—or



even to approach its modest levels of what would, in almost any other film genre, be considered slightly above-average though far-from-outstanding critical achievements.

Right?

Not quite. **THE DRAGON FLIES** may not rival its much more popular predecessor, but it certainly approximates it in production values and the quality of care put into plotting, casting and acting. Above all, this isn't just another attempt to cash in on the proven public appeal which the word **DRAGON** can add to the title of virtually any lackluster martial arts movie.

Unfortunately, that may be precisely the mistaken image under which this release will suffer. The ticket-buying

public is by now considerably more wary and cynical, the red-hot fever of the Kung Fu media craze having cooled somewhat in the endless stream of low-quality/high-hype products they have had to endure.

THE DRAGON FLIES is co-produced by Golden Harvest and an Australian concern, and has been released in the United States by 20th Century-Fox. It opens very somberly on a landscape which might at first be mistaken for Nevada or Arizona, but which is instead Australia, as soon becomes clear. Immediately there are some impressive qualities—the color, the soundtrack and the economy of dialogue all serve to indicate that this is no cheap exploitation attempt. This is

the real thing.

The picture is both written and directed by Brian Trenchard Smith, who chose an impressive amount of locations at which to shoot the film, from Sydney to the central Australian desert to Hong Kong to Kowloon. The snappy photography is the work of Russell Boyd, and the unusual score is by Noel Quinlan. The trio of Smith, Boyd and Quinlan—along with star Jimmy Wang Yu—manage to present a masterful-if-flawed feature that is interesting both for its Kung Fu action and for its episodic plot.

Ayers Rock, "the largest monolith in the world," provides the locale for the opening scene. Dawn finds a tourist bus approaching the well-known attraction, and inside the vehicle is Win Chan, a Chinese dope smuggler who is about to attempt the old exchange-the-bag-of-heroin-for-an-identical-ordinary bag with a waiting Australian underworld courier.

But there's also an inspector from the Federal Narcotics Bureau aboard the bus who's hip to the set-up, and as the two unsavory characters attempt to complete their transaction outside in the first light of morning, a helicopter swoops over Ayers Rock and begins to settle toward them.

Suddenly it's every man for himself!

The Australian courier tries to escape in his car, and the pace picks up with vibrant tension. Helicopter chases car, and there's an exceptionally well-staged auto crash, albeit with the obligatory explosion.

Win Chan simultaneously makes a futile attempt at escape by scrambling up the rock while being pursued by the local narcotics inspector. This allows writer/director Trenchard the first opportunity to showcase some fast fist and foot action. The Chinese smuggler knows Kung Fu, you see, and he's not shy about crotch kicks. The fight choreography is executed with finesse, and the moves themselves are not the standard well-worn repertoire to which you may have become accustomed from watching all those inferior martial arts pictures.

Eventually, though, Win Chan is taken prisoner.

This opening sequence is *very* good, and establishes at once that the producers mean business. There can be no question that **THE DRAGON FLIES** is going to be an all-out adventure story told with terse visual excitement.

Another departure becomes apparent with the first major verbal confrontation: These people are talking like *real*

human beings! The dialogue is frank and informal, and, by some standards, even mildly profane. Also, there's a nice little touch (one of many throughout the flick), in that Win Chan denies being able to speak English and—as the conversation slips into Chinese—subtitles appear to impart the dialogue. This gimmick, sparingly used, lends a subtle air of verisimilitude to the story.

The Australian narcs finally decide to send for an agent from Hong Kong to interrogate Win Chan and arrange for his extradition.

Cut to Jimmy Wang Yu, in the role of Inspector Fang Sing Leng, as he displays his considerable facilities in Kung Fu before a class of Hong Kong police in training. Screen credits begin rolling and the title sequence is devoted to establishing Wang Yu's expertise.

He's good, fast, flashy—but in the inevitable comparison which arises mentally between remembered displays of incredible skill by Bruce Lee on screen and the demonstration here provided by Jimmy Wang Yu, one thing becomes obvious. Lee had a sense of showmanship coupled with an unsurpassed flare for Kung Fu that may never be equalled by the successors to his cinematic throne.

But make no mistake about it, Wang Yu is good—damned good—and it is only the fact that there has been such a man as Bruce Lee before him that allows for any criticism of his efforts in **THE DRAGON FLIES**.

Reputedly the first Chinese actor to become a multimillionaire, Jimmy Wang Yu is a Shanghai-born swimming and black belt karate champion who has spent something like ten years achieving his present status as the heir apparent to the much-sought-after position of movies' top international Kung Fu star. His credits include, among others, **THE CHINESE BOXER**, **A MAN CALLED TIGER**, and **THE CHINESE PROFESSIONALS**; much of his popularity accrues from his penchant for performing his own stuntwork before the cameras, and there is a goodly and most impressive amount of it present in **THE DRAGON FLIES**.

As he practices before the police academy, a hang glider appears overhead and drops down to the parade ground. Not unsurprisingly, it disgorges a beautiful Caucasian woman—a journalist from Sydney named Caroline Thorne (played by Ros Spiers). As will become apparent by the end of this film, Jimmy Wang Yu

has a thing for beautiful Caucasian women; or maybe it's just that he and Brian Trenchard Smith suspect their international audience does, and thus are playing it safe.

Whatever.

Cinema is obviously a visual medium, and a hang glider is a highly visual device that here allows for some splendid scenic location shots and, later in the story, lends itself to some equally splendid stuntwork. Hang gliding is relatively new as a national sport, much as motorcycling was ten years ago, but

and again, I was moved by some particularly refreshing line that bore a resemblance to the way people really speak, only to be brought down in the very next moment by as mean a cliché as I've ever heard on the Late Late Show.

A good example is the obligatory bedroom scene between Caroline and Wang Yu. As they are exchanging the required dialogue between lovers post-coitus, Jimmy actually comes out straight-faced with the line, "a man's got to do what a man's got to do."

Despite that enlightening truism, Caroline agrees to meet him back in Sydney, where he is going to take custody of Win Chan, the dope smuggler.

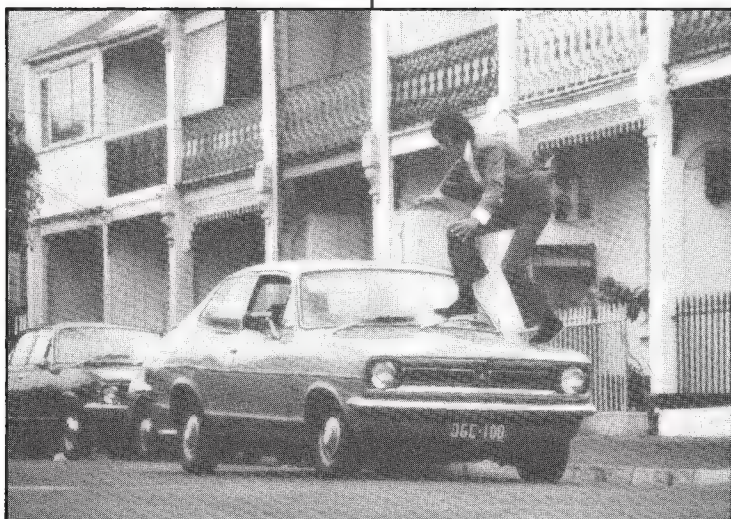
More and more these days, motion picture directors are doing whatever they can to avoid simple transition scenes, even at the cost of utter chaos and confusion, thus it's especially nice to see that writer/director Smith is not afraid of traditional transitions. Wang Yu flies to Australia, and is met by the two narcs, who anticipate no problems with his visit; they are more concerned

with their on-going investigation of underworld magnate Jack Wilton.

Now follows yet another surprise. Wang Yu as Fang Sing Leng is a hard-boiled hero every bit as lawless as errant American cops in flicks like **THE FRENCH CONNECTION** or **DIRTY HARRY**. Alone in a cell with the close-lipped Win Chan, he administers a brutal beating to obtain the results he wants: The name of Win Chan's Australian connection.

Coincidentally, it just happens to be the aforementioned Jack Wilton.

There is violence a-plenty in **THE DRAGON FLIES**—that is what theatergoers expect of a Kung Fu movie, and that is what its makers have been very careful to provide. All in all, the feature is an excellent balance of the elements essential to any entertaining non-serious escape vehicle, whatever its genre, which is what leads me to predict at least modest success for the effort. But, as with the dialogue, the violence is a strange blend of the real and the unreal. The sound of a sharp chop or a fist or foot making contact is



its popularity seems to be on the increase and this is being reflected in and to an extent reinforced by the popular media. For instance, my first exposure to hang gliding was in the movie version of **TOMMY**, released this Spring in New York; but when I arrived in Oregon later in the Summer, I found that what had been new to me was already a well-established if occasionally fatal sport. The danger and the exhilaration go hand-in-hand, and the appeal is undeniable. Ergo, vicarious enjoyment of hang gliding via cinema is a natural, and I was pleasantly surprised upon my return to New York to find that the producers had chosen to incorporate the sport into **THE DRAGON FLIES**. And, after all, it is the presence of a hang glider that eventually accounts for the film's title.

There are some incredible paradoxes in this movie. One of them is the strange mixture of good and bad dialogue that emits indiscriminately from the mouths of the actors. Time



always magnified out of all proportion, much like the old BATMAN TV show, and this serves to burlesque the violence, to give it a surreal air. This is the "harmless" violence of THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. as opposed to the sickening violence of SOLDIER BLUE. But there are occasional lapses, subtle flashes of the reality of pain and brutality, mixed in among the usual flying fists and feet.

The Sydney cops refuse to discuss Wang Yu's newfound information, and rush him with Win Chan to the courthouse where the extradition proceedings are to be completed. As I've mentioned, this film holds its share of surprises, and the sudden assassination of Win Chan—though I should have been expecting it—came as one of them. Professional and effective.

And a good excuse for a chase scene, as Jimmy dashes off in mad pursuit of the sniper. Here Trenchard Smith resorts to some time-honored ploys by sending his characters crashing through crowds, upsetting objects and knocking people flying for calculated laughs from the audience.

One of the most magnificent stunts in the entire movie transpires as the assassin attempts to escape on a motorcycle only to receive a fantastic flying drop kick while in motion from an unbe-

lievably agile Jimmy Wang Yu! This man may lack the charisma and good looks of Bruce Lee, but he's one hell of a tough customer, there's no doubt of that.

A long man-against-man battle ensues in a restaurant, filled with deliberate touches like the wicked slash Wang Yu receives down his back, the use of the telephone cord for strangulation, and an ample amount of Kung Fu blows, blocks and bastardizations. The obsession with crotch kicks continues, and the fight goes on for so long that the sheer impossibility of any two human beings withstanding all that punishment becomes overwhelmingly clear. Suspension of disbelief crumbles, and in its place comes the inescapable conclusion that these people can take more blows than a steel punching bag.

At length the carnage ceases, but Wang Yu's adversary cannot be pumped for information. He's dead.

And, to add insult to injury, another bit of bad dialogue surfaces as Yu delivers the eulogy for his deceased opponent: "A master of Kung Fu, he used his art for evil purposes."

The scene switches abruptly to the headquarters of Jack Wilton, to establish his meanness for once and all. Finally, George Lazenby (as Wilton) makes his first appearance in THE

DRAGON FLIES. Granted, writer/director Smith has been setting up the story all this time and introducing characters, but in this case he waited entirely too long to introduce the heavy.

Lazenby inherited the role of James Bond, secret agent 007, from Sean Connery back in 1969. He made only one movie as Bond—ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE—but along with the earlier thriller, GOLDFINGER, it is among the very best of the 007 screen adventures. Since then he has appeared in THE UNIVERSAL SOLDIER, and in another martial arts movie playing opposite Angela Mao, STONER.

Here, not far from where he was born and looking a bit older than last time he appeared on screen, Lazenby is engaged in taking on a squad of martial artists-cum-bodyguards at his skyscraper stronghold. He moves a lot better and faster than his successor as 007, Roger Moore, and he has less of a paunch; after seeing Moore's sluggish and inept attempt at Kung Fu in THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN, I'm more than ever convinced that producers Broccoli and Saltzman should have kept Lazenby in the replacement role of James Bond. He acquits himself

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quite well here against a rather routine bunch of karateka, but he fights dirty. After wiping all of them out, he removes twin slugs of iron from his wrapped fists. If you had any doubts about his ethics before, they're gone now.

Lazenby is a scoundrel!

Acting on suspicion, Wang Yu and an Australian dick have paid a visit to the selfsame building. They know Wilton/Lazenby is a bad dude, but as yet they don't have enough definitive evidence. Yu is cocky and has incredible recuperative abilities, judging by his instant recovery from the restaurant fracas. He's also somewhat unmindful of the law, as has already been amply demonstrated.

"We have no search warrant, remember?" says his partner impotently as Jimmy blithely breaks into an inner office.

There's an excellent exchange of dialogue between Wang Yu and a fat henchman sitting behind a desk. The fat guy offers him a cigar from an open cigar box; "Thank you, I don't smoke," replies Yu as he deliberately closes the box with crushing force on the man's stubby fingers.

Lazenby, it seems, is not available for questioning at the moment.

In answer to a carefully-phrased parting query from the fat man about a missing member of Lazenby's organization—obviously a reference to Win Chan's assassin—Wang Yu answers pointblank: "I killed him." That frank boast, coupled with his rude invasion of Lazenby's lair, has marked him as one bad dude in need of a real lesson.

It is not long in coming, but it ends ignominiously for the would-be instructors who attack Jimmy with iron bars in his hotel room; a kinetic, bloody ballet of violence culminates with those who are still alive fleeing desperately from the one-man death machine.

Ere long, Wang Yu rendezvous with Caroline Thorne, who has returned to Sydney, and through her he wangles an invitation to a garden party at which Lazenby is guest of honor. Here follows one of the corniest scenes in the movie, as Lazenby—armed with a crossbow—shoots an apple off a dumb blonde's head purely for the amusement of the rest of the jaded society set, and to impress them with his macho badness.

This is the prelude to the first man-to-man confrontation between Lazenby

and Wang Yu, each trying to out cool the other. Hostility bristles between them as they exchange taunts.

"I go to the East fairly often—I find the Chinese make the best servants," baits Lazenby, and the line is well delivered. But the dialogue rapidly degenerates as he adds, "I never met a Chinese yet who didn't have a yellow streak."

They engage in an exhibition of the martial arts, ostensibly for the garden party guests, which turns deadly serious at once, but before there can be any conclusive result to the contest, George Lazenby's goons interrupt and are put out of action one by one while the big man stands back and watches with feigned amusement.

Finally, the two main men stand facing each other again; bloodlust burns hotly in both of them. Lazenby draws a bead on Wang Yu with the crossbow. The facade maintained for the benefit of the bystanders has completely eroded, and it is only the timely intervention of Caroline that prevents a serious disaster.

Alone later that night, Jimmy again acts in the most straightforward and direct fashion, with his customary disregard for the law. He scales Lazenby's skyscraper stronghold via the drainpipe in a well-staged and impeccably-executed effort—one of the most realistic and effective such scenes I have ever witnessed on film, and one of the many reasons I rate THE DRAGON FLIES on the same scale as ENTER THE DRAGON and the latter-day James Bond movies.

Entering through an open tenth-floor window, he noses about until he finds sufficient evidence of Wilton/Lazenby's involvement with drug trafficking.

And he almost gets killed.

In his most harrowing battle yet, he faces nine sword-wielding antagonists on their own terms and comes out alive—barely. The fight is not as realistic as earlier encounters in terms of choreography and pseudo-accuracy—in fact, a portion is even speeded up—but it is the most realistic in displaying the genuine fatigue and personal injuries likely to be sustained by a man in Wang Yu's place. Bloody, near the end of his endurance, he manages to escape down the elevator shaft and out the front door, where he eludes frenzied pursuit by hitching a ride with two girls in a passing van.

Fevered conflict, narrow escapes, beautiful women—this film is outright

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(Continued from page 62)

fun with no pretensions beyond providing a couple hours of fast-paced entertainment.

Anyway, Jimmy persuades the driver, Angelica—another gorgeous Caucasian chick played by Rebecca Gilling—to take him to her father, a veterinarian surgeon who can mend Yu's wounds outside a hospital and, therefore, away from any assassination attempts on the injured man's life by Lazenby's now-outraged organization.

"It's a bloody miracle he's still alive, if you ask me," says the vet. That's just what I was thinking.

The ensuing romantic scenes as Angelica and Jimmy fall in love during his convalescent period are handled in typical montage fashion, but are effective nonetheless. And they evoke a sentimental tenderness and sincerity of feeling not often achieved in films of the Kung Fu genre. As a sequence, they also allow for the passage of time and the recovery of Wang Yu.

"Mmm, this is nice," moans Angelica.

"What did you expect, acupuncture?" quips Jimmy in a deliberate and successful attempt at getting some tension-relieving laughs during this lull in the escalating over-structure of the story.

But nothing lasts forever, as they say, and while she's driving him back to Sydney, some of Lazenby's people plant a bomb on the van. She is killed in the ensuing explosion, though Jimmy survives. This is an obvious plot device for both evoking instant emotion and giving Wang Yu a righteous motive for renewing his merciless crusade against Lazenby. Unfortunately, the scene is nearly gratuitous and its potentialities are never realized within the context of the film. It simply happens, and Wang Yu goes about his business exactly as if he'd never met Angelica at all, with nary so much as a reference to her during the remainder of the movie.

Also, I found the fact that she was noticeably breathing as Jimmy carried her dead body from the wreck to be extremely distracting.

Staggering back to the highway, Wang Yu flags down a car and unceremoniously throws the driver out, usurping his vehicle without so much as a thank you—and ultimately destroying it in the car chase sequence that follows. His disdain for common civil and property rights has by now become legendary.

The obligatory chase is littered with good comic bits that meet with an en-

thusiastic response from the audience, and there's a nice stunt involving a Kawasaki 900-Z1 motorcycle crashing over a truck and down into a river, followed by the truck itself. At another point, a car careens directly through a roadside billboard in a splendid flying thrust—albeit in my experience the average roadside billboard is not made of paper, like this one.

Finally, Yu engages in a bumper-car match with the last remaining driver of Lazenby's motorized assassin squad, battering the other car repeatedly until the body actually begins to fall apart. Unlikely—but very visual. The blood-crazed Wang Yu eventually forces his opponent's vehicle off the road and batters the man's crippled auto time and again until it erupts in flames. Jimmy stands by ruthlessly as the other guy, stunned and bruised, perishes in the fire.

As you may have noticed by now, George Lazenby's role is minimal and, despite the fact that he gets starring status along with Wang Yu, his presence has been reduced to such scarcity that it almost becomes an absence. Whether his part as the heavy seems uninspired because it was such an abbreviated and stereotypical role, or whether they cut most of his scenes

from the final version because he played the part so poorly, is a matter for speculation. Suffice it to say that for Lazenby this is a fiasco.

The tempo is building now as the climax begins to unfold. With Caroline's help back in Sydney, Wang Yu at last fulfills the prophecy of the picture's title and takes to the sky in a hang glider.

The Dragon flies!

According to the final production notes for the movie, Jimmy Wang Yu plunged approximately one hundred feet to the ground when his glider stalled in mid-air. He suffered some internal bleeding, and shooting was delayed for a couple of days. Further attempts landed him in Sydney Harbor no less than eight times before the sequence was committed properly to film—"swooping aerial shots of the Sydney skyline unlike any footage of its kind."

At length he lands atop Lazenby's penthouse fortress. There's a skirmish with the inevitable group of guards, which is tightly edited to achieve the dynamic effects of good comic-book storytelling—a huge fist punching directly out at the audience, for instance. Wang Yu also makes a long downward leap which is artificially exaggerated

by cinema technique until it assumes superheroic dimensions.

During these fast-paced final minutes of the feature, a most disconcerting and sloppy technical problem intervenes in the form of unsynchronized dubbing, which is both maddeningly distracting and virtually inexcusable, since this is not Chinese dubbed into English, but merely routine dubbing of the sort done on almost all American film releases. I have not screened *THE DRAGON FLIES* elsewhere, so perhaps it was just this particular print or a malfunction of the projector at the theater where I saw the movie that accounts for the problem. Still, it detracted tremendously from my full enjoyment of the story.

In true Tarzan fashion, Jimmy Wang Yu smashes through the seventeenth story window of Lazenby's stronghold, swinging on a rope. As the typical villain in any melodrama worthy of its formula, Lazenby reverts to type and attempts to use a machine gun on his unarmed assailant. Misspent technology versus a human martial arts machine!

It's the ultimate confrontation, and while Lazenby's men attempt to cut through the steel security door which seals off the apartment, a desperate bat-

tle is being waged within. As I mentioned earlier, Lazenby is reasonably convincing with his Kung Fu moves and he carries off the match with Wang Yu as well as can be expected. The emphasis in this movie is, however, at least as much on good photography and storytelling as it is on the mere exploitation of Kung Fu.

Lazenby may have been the master of his own martial arts studio, but he's no match for Wang Yu, who knocks him temporarily unconscious. In moments, the crew at the door will break through. Jimmy hurriedly explores a walk-in safe in which he finds arms, ammunition, explosives—and heroin. Convenient. He grabs the evidence he needs and prepares a confession which—no use acting out of character at this late date—he will force the now-awakening Lazenby to sign under threat of death.

In what has to be the most humiliating scene possible for someone who has at one time played the suave and sophisticated James Bond, Lazenby gets a grenade taped into his open mouth, much like the traditional roast pig with an apple in its craw. Jimmy threatens to pull the pin if his now-terrified captive fails to sign the confession.

Lazenby signs.

There is a sudden disturbance at the door, and Wang Yu glances away for a moment. Lazenby grabs for his throat, and the next instant stands awestruck staring at the grenade pin that has come free in Wang Yu's hand. Looking surprised himself—perhaps because such a callous and deliberate act would be too much even for him—Jimmy acts with haste and practicality.

He shoves Lazenby into the safe with the explosives and slams the door, locking it. The last to be seen of Lazenby is his frightened, panic-stricken face still bloated with the grenade protruding obscenely from his mouth. The ignominy of it all.

Wang Yu makes a quick exit out the window, sliding down a rope seventeen storeys to the ground in a quick visual set of shots.

Already, before the final few seconds of *THE DRAGON FLIES* have appeared on the screen, it is clear that writer/director Brian Trenchard Smith's major shortcoming is plotting—it's far better than most Kung Fu flicks, but not quite up to average thriller standards. He has other faults, of course, such as occasional bad dialoguing and direction, but these are sufficiently balanced by his often good efforts in the opposite direction. Jimmy Wang Yu delivers a reasonable performance as an actor and an outstanding performance as a martial artist and stuntman. And thus the movie, judged as a whole within the context of its genre, is a definite success; it is to Smith's credit that he could put it all together.

THE DRAGON FLIES is flawed, but fun.

Watching Wang Yu's incredible descent from below are the two Australian inspectors from the Federal Narcotics Bureau. Jimmy displays the dope and the signed confession to them.

"What do you do for an encore," they ask.

Before he can reply, the entire seventeenth floor of the skyscraper disappears in a gigantic explosion of smoke and flame.

—David Anthony Kraft

NEXT ISSUE: The conclusion to our senses-shattering special report on martial arts films, with words by DON MCGREGOR and a special overview of the history of martial arts as a genre and some analytical conjectures for its immediate future. Join us!



REVENGE
IS THE
JACK OF HEARTS,
TIGER--

--AND I CLAIM
IT BY TRIAL
OF FIRE!

FOR TWO NIGHTS THE
BEING KNOWN AS THE
WHITE TIGER HAS
BEEN HUNTED-- BY
THE POLICE, THE NEWS-
PAPERS, THE MYSTERIOUS
SUPER-HERO
KNOWN AS THE PROWLER...

...AND BY THE OTHER HALF
OF HIMSELF! THE HECTOR
AYALA HALF THAT BECOMES
SUBLIMATED WHEN THE
TIGER AMULETS ABOUT HIS
NECK DICTATE THE CHANGE
FROM MAN TO SUPER-
HERO!

NOW THE TIGER HAS STOPPED
RUNNING... HAS TURNED TO FACE
HIS NEWEST HUNTER...

...AND IF THE BRISTLING
ENERGY-BEAMS AT HIS MAILED-
FOE'S WRISTS ARE ANY INDICA-
TION-- IT MAY YET BE THE
DEATH OF THE WHITE TIGER!



YOU CAN DROP THE INNOCENCE ROUTINE, TIGER! I'M WISE TO YOU! I KNOW THAT WHOLE TRAINYARD KILLING* WAS NO MORE THAN AN ALIBI--

--A COVER-UP OF YOUR REAL CRIME!

WHICH WAS--WHAT, SENOR?

HAVE TO KEEP HIM TALKING--TILL THE PAIN STOPS IN MY HANDS--

--PAIN I CAUSED MYSELF! BEATING THEM AGAINST THE WALL IN SELF-PITY!

*OUR LAST FEW ISSUES--ARCHIE



I TOLD YOU TO DROP IT, TIGER! I'M TALKING ABOUT MURDER!

THE DEATH OF A HUMAN BEING!

AND I'M CALLING YOU GUILTY!



¡USTEDES MUY LOCO, SENOR!

I HAVE KILLED NO ONE!



AND I SAY YOU'RE A LIAR!

NOT THAT IT MATTERS MUCH --YOU'RE GOING TO PAY JUST THE SAME!

THE PAIN IS LESSENING-- I CAN MOVE MY FINGERS AGAIN!

NOW IT IS HE WHO MUST MOVE--



--CLOSER! YOU'VE ALREADY FELT THE POWER OF MY HAND-- BLASTS, KILLER... AT A DISTANCE!

BUT AT CLOSE RANGE THEY'RE SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN!

ONLY IF ONE GETS THE CHANCE TO USE THEM, SENOR--

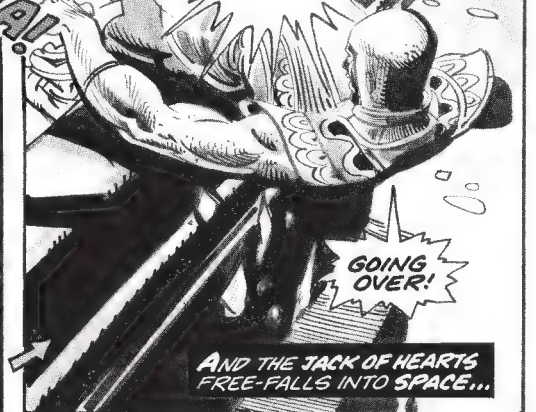
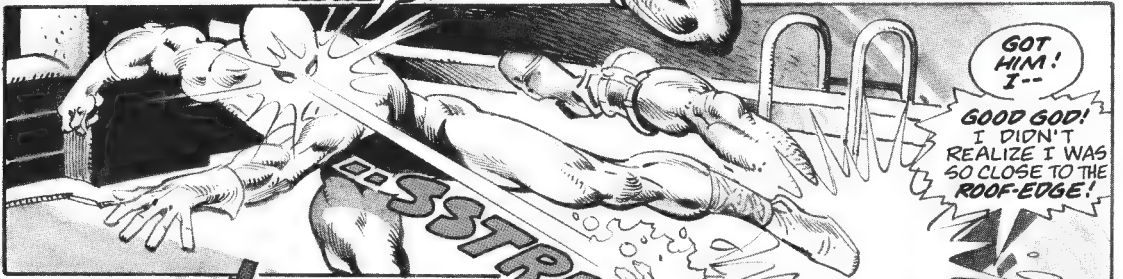


--A CHANCE YOU HAVE THROWN AWAY BY COMING NEAR ENOUGH FOR ME TO DO--

--THIS!

UNNH! YOU MAY SLOW ME DOWN, TIGER-- BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO STOP ME!

¿NO, AMIGO?









-- BUT HE IS
READY FOR ME ...
BEFORE I CAN
EVEN REGAIN MY
FOOTING!

LET'S
FINISH IT
KILLER!



AS
PERMANENTLY
AS THE MAN YOU
HAD MURDERED!

TOO OFF BALANCE
TO LEAP CLEAR!

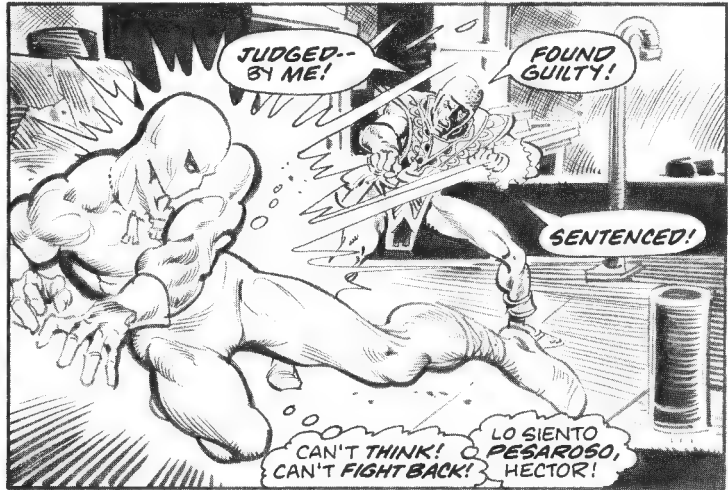
NO WAY TO
AVOID--!



HAVE TO TRY
AND GET UP!

FOR
HECTOR!

YOU'RE
THROUGH,
KILLER!



JUDGED--
BY ME!

FOUND
GUILTY!

SENTENCED!

CAN'T THINK!
CAN'T FIGHT BACK!

LO SIENTO
PESAROSO,
HECTOR!



I
AM...
...SORRY!

AND EXECUTED,
TIGER--



-- FOR THE
MURDER--

-- OF MY
FATHER!

SUN.

AND
VULTURES.

SAND AND BURNING WINDS DON'T HELP
ANY EITHER-- BUT IT'S THE FIRST ONE
THAT KILLS YOU...

...AND THE SECOND
WHICH HANG AROUND
TO MAKE SURE.

NOBODY LEFT
IN THE PLANE.
YOU CHECKED
FOR THAT AS
BEST AS YOU
COULD.

AND BESIDES... YOU COULDN'T
SPEND ALL THAT MUCH TIME,
COULD YOU?

NOT WHEN YOU KNEW
HE HAD GOTTEN OUT
ALREADY... AND STARTED
OF ACROSS THE SAND.

WITH THE
SUITCASE.

NOT THAT YOU EVEN
CARE ANYMORE ABOUT
THE BLASTED THING.
IT'S JUST THE PRINCIPLE.

AND YOU'RE NOT
ABOUT TO LET THE
MOLE JUST UP AND
WALK AWAY WITH IT...
ARE YOU, ABE BROWN?

MOLE...!

WHICH WASN'T TOO GOOD,
WHAT WITH THE BANGING
AROUND YOU TOOK WHEN
YOU GUIDED THE PLANE
DOWN FOR A BELLYLANDING
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
EVER-LOVIN' SAHARA.

A LOT OF PEOPLE
DIED BECAUSE OF
THAT HUNK OF
LEATHER, CARD-
BOARD AND STEEL.

ARE YOU?



HEY! IF IT AIN'T
THE **COLORED BOY**
WHAT MESSED UP THE
WHOLE **OPERATION**
BACK IN THE **PLANE!***

YOU DON'T
LOOK SO GOOD,
COLORED BOY!

IN FACT-- YOU LOOK
KINDA **PITIFUL!** LIKE
AN **ANIMAL** JUST **BEGGIN'**
TO BE PUT OUT OF ITS
MISERY!

WOULD YOU LIKE
THAT, COLORED
BOY?

*LAST 15H--ARCH.

THE
CHICK WHO
GOT HIM INTO
THIS.*

CURSING
BRILLALAE--THE
CHICK WHO PASSED HIM
THE **SUITCASE** BACK AT THE
AIRPORT.

BLAM!

BULLET
BITES SAND AND
ALL ABE BROWN
CAN DO IS STARE,
TIREDELY.

FUNNY. SHE LOOKED SO GOOD.

*DHKF#2!
--ARCHIE.



I ONLY GOT THREE
BULLETS LEFT, BOY! ONE
WAS TO KINDA **SHAKE YOU**
UP! THAT ONE WAS FOR
THE **BROW** AND **TABLE-TOP!**

BLAM!

AN' THIS ONE
IS FOR **SCRATCH**
AN' **WRINKLES!**
THEY WAS ALL
GOOD GUYS--AN'
YOU KILLED 'EM!



BUT THIS ONE,
COLORED BOY--
THIS ONE'S FOR
ME!

THE
MOLE!

A KIND OF
THANK YOU
FOR SEEIN' TO
IT THAT I'M THE
ONLY ONE LEFT!



NOBODY TO SHARE
THE **FORTUNE** THAT THIS
HERE **SUITCASE** IS GONNA
BRING IN! JUST ME--
AN' ALL THAT MONEY!

JUST...

YOU HEAR THE
MOLE SHUT UP...
BUT YOUR ARM
HURTS AND YOU'RE
MUCH TOO TIRED TO
EVEN CARE ENOUGH
TO WONDER WHY
HE'S STOPPED
TALKING.



AHEM. HOUSE POLICY
DICTATES THAT AT THIS
JUNCTURE WE CUT...

... TO TIMES SQUARE
NEW YORK.

SORRY.

ONE WOULD
NOT THINK IT'S
DIFFICULT TO
FIND EMPLOYMENT
-- WHAT WITH ALL
THE ADVERTISE-
MENTS APPEARING
IN THE DAILY
PAPERS!

WAS IT
NOT YOU, LIN
SUN, WHO TOLD
ME THAT SUCH
ADS ARE CALLED
"...COME
ONS"--

--A DEVICE WHEREBY
MENIAL JOBS ARE DISGUISED
BEHIND A GLAMOROUS TITLE
SO THAT THE AGENCY MAY
COLLECT A FEE?

YES, LOTUS.
IT WAS I!

BUT ONE HOPES
ONE'S CYNICISM IS
NOT A TRUE GUIDE
TO THE VALUES
OF OTHERS.

THIS IS NEW
YORK, MY LOVE!

AND FROM WHAT
LITTLE I HAVE SEEN
OF IT--IT WOULD SEEM
THAT OPTIMISM IS
NOT ITS GREATEST--

LIN SUN! LOOK!

THE WORDS
ON THE SIDE
OF THAT
BUILDING!

IT'S THE ALLIED
CHEMICAL BUILDING
MY LOVE! THEY RUN A
NEWSREEL IN LIGHTS
ABOUT THE TOWER--

PLANE CRASH!

BUT THE
WORDS, LIN
SUN! TELLING
OF A PLANE
CRASH!

IS THAT NOT
THE PLANE ABE'S
WAS ON?

FLIGHT
#647 TO
ALGERIA!
YES!!

IT-- IT SAYS NO
SURVIVORS HAVE
BEEN FOUND!

WE MUST
CALL BOB!
HE IS
MAKING A
FILM SOME-
WHERE IN
CANADA!

ONLY HE HAS
THE MONEY WE
WOULD NEED
TO FLY AFTER
ABE!

BUT IT
WAS HE WHO
DESTROYED
THE SONS OF
THE TIGER!
WOULD HE
STILL HELP?

"HE MUST, LOTUS!
NO MATTER HOW
HE FEELS ABOUT
YOU AND I-- HE
MUST HELP,
FOR ABE!"

DON'T BOTHER
ANSWERING THAT,
MEL. I'VE GOT A
SCENE READY AND
WAITING--

--AND RICKI'LL
BUST A
BLOOD
VESSEL IF
ANYTHING
SCREWS
IT UP
AGAIN!

IT'S PROBABLY
JUST ANOTHER
OF YOUR FANS,
BOBBIE!

YOU GO AHEAD!
MAYBE I WILL
ANSWER IT--
JUST FOR FUN!

SURE, YOU
DO THAT...

"... WHILE WE RETURN TO THAT ROOFTOP FEATURED A LONG TIME AGO... IN THE BEGINNING OF OUR STORY.

IT'S OVER!

FUNNY. REVENGE DOESN'T FEEL AS GOOD AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD.

NOT THAT IT MATTERS!

AND YOU'RE JUST THE FIRST, TIGER!

THE FIRST IN A STINKING CHAIN THAT TOOK MY MOTHER AWAY FROM ME YEARS AGO-- THAT WAITED UNTIL THE DAY I GRADUATED COLLEGE TO TAKE MY FATHER--

--AND THAT MADE ME WHAT I AM!

LISTEN, HART! WHY DON'T YOU SEND THE KID AWAY SO WE CAN FINISH OUR DISCUSSION?

I'M AFRAID OUR DISCUSSION WAS FINISHED QUITE A WHILE AGO, MR. MARIS-- AND MY ANSWER WAS THEN, AS IT IS NOW--NO.

AND AS FOR MY SON, JACK-- AS HEIR TO MY ESTATE-- I PREFER THAT HE ATTEND MEETINGS SUCH AS THIS!

SO THAT HE MAY BE AWARE OF HOW TO DEAL WITH UNPLEASANT SITUATIONS WHEN IT IS HIS TURN TO DO SO!

YOU'RE A FOOL, HART!

YES-- BUT A GENIUS AS WELL, AND THAT, MR. MARIS-- IS WHY I INTEREST YOU!

FOR IT WAS MY GENIUS THAT DEVELOPED THE ZERO FLUID! A TOTALLY CLEAN, IMMENSELY POWERFUL FORM OF LIQUID FUEL! SO POWERFUL, IN FACT--

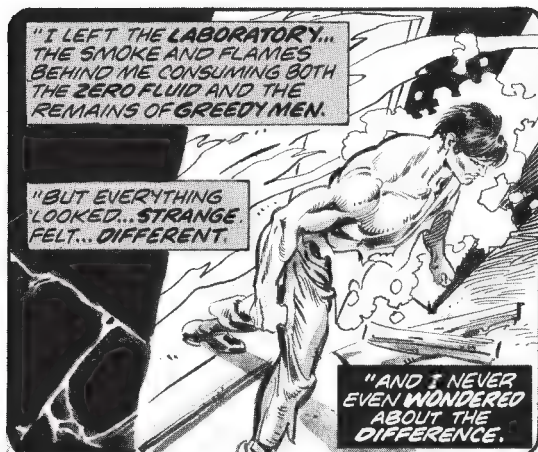
-- THAT THERE WILL BE NO NEED OF ANY OTHER FORM OF ENERGY-- FOSSIL, NUCLEAR OR SOLAR -- TO FULFILL MAN'S NEEDS!

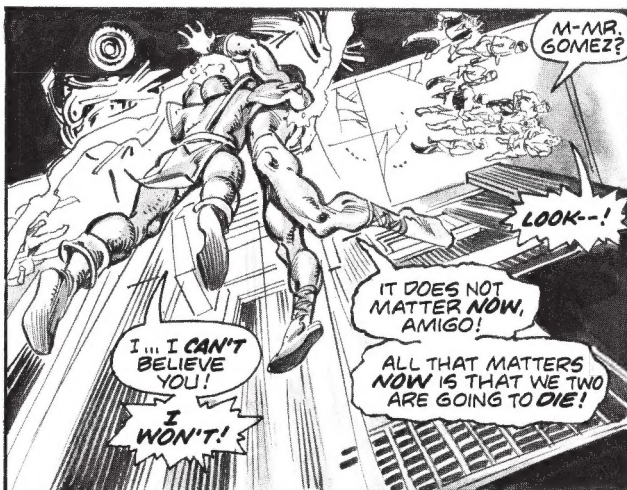
AND THAT, MR. MARIS-- IS WHAT YOU ARE AFRAID OF!







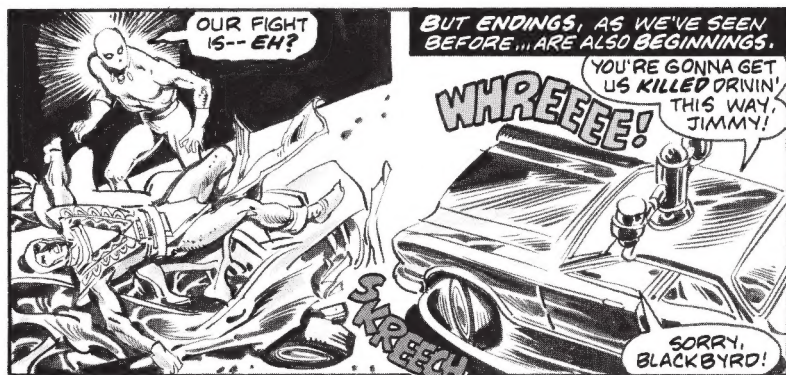
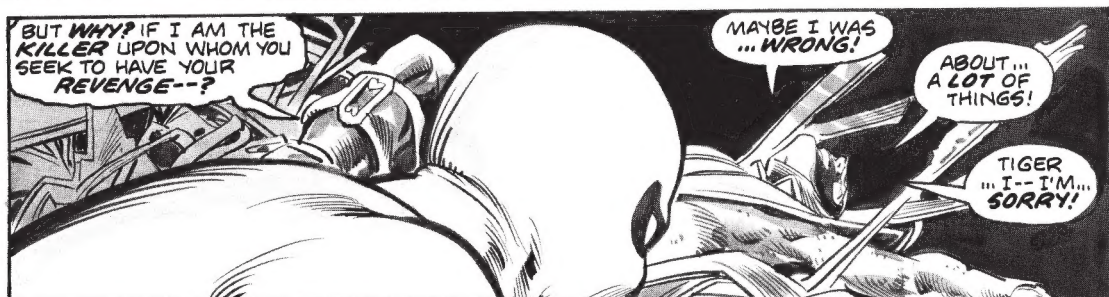






SKRASH!

FOR A SECOND THE
THE AUTOMOBILE SCREAMS
AS THE FALLING BODIES RAM
THE HORN MECHANISM THROUGH
THE ARM OF THE STEERING COLUMN...



BUT THAT EXPLANATION--AND THE ACTION THAT FOLLOWS--MUST WAIT, UNTIL... NEXT ISSUE!



Shadowcat

